

## THE MYSTERY IS SOLVED!

Don't you just love a good mystery? A good mystery keeps you on edge: you can't wait to turn the next page or watch the next scene. What makes a good mystery? Perhaps it is the element of surprise, the unexpected twist, or the last minute revelation that brings about a big "Ahaa!" Mysteries tend to be written from one of two perspectives: either you know who did the crime and follow as the hero works through the clues to solve it; or the you are as much in the dark as to who did it until the very end as is the hero or heroine. Do you have a favorite mystery program? CSI, Monk, or one of the Law and Order programs? My include Castle, Jessie Stone , Colombo, and Shot in the Dark. What is your favorite mystery movie or TV program?

In our text St. Paul speaks of the mystery of God's will. At Paul's time many of the pagan cults also spoke of mysteries. But Paul used the term in a different way than the cults. The cults used it in reference to secret information they would tell their new inductees whereas Paul uses it to refer to that which is unknown to mankind but which God must reveal to us regarding His gracious plan to save sinners. Paul's point is that God's will is a mystery to us and only becomes known to us when God chooses to reveal His will to us. The gracious will of God is not found in the world of nature; it cannot be seen in a beautiful sunset or in a majestic mountain scene; it cannot be deduced by human reason or logic. It must be revealed to us.

From the perspective of natural, unregenerate man, what appears to be our spiritual destiny? Misery and hopeless in this life and damnation in the life to come. Simply put, we are spiritually lost, doomed to suffering damnation for eternity in Hell! Not a very pleasant future to look forward to, is it?

Perhaps you can understand why people who do not know God or His mysterious will and love for sinners, attempt to appease God through good works or dream up all sort ways how they can earn God's forgiveness. But such thoughts offer no comfort or peace. How many works would it take to win God's favor? How reliable are the thoughts of man, and upon what are they based? Do man's idea of good works really give you any comfort and peace at the time of death, would you wonder have you had done enough?

But the Good News is that we can have comfort and peace now. We can have the assurance now that God loves us and forgives us. We can have

these because God has chosen to reveal the mystery of His will to us. The mystery of God's will includes: the incarnation of Jesus; the sacrificial death of Jesus; the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles in the Church; and the change we will experience at the time of the resurrection.

And what is the mystery of God's will that offers us comfort in the struggles of life, hope when all looks bleak, and assurance that as sinners we are forgiven and have eternal life? The mystery of God's will is His plan to save the world through Jesus Christ.

In all my years as a pastor I never met a person who said, "When I die I hope to go to Hell and burn for an eternity paying for my sins!" Never, not even once! People who believe in an afterlife want to go to heaven! How can a sinner get there? It seems hopeless when there is nothing we can do or offer to satisfy God's demands for our sins, when we can offer nothing to escape God's wrath and judgment for our sins. Yet in our hopelessness, God gives us hope! Scripture teaches that God wants "**all to know the truth and to repent and be saved.**" God pleads with us as He did with ancient Israel, "**Turn from your sins and be saved.**" In His love for us God sent Jesus to save us from our sins.

How did Jesus save us? How did Jesus pay the ransom price for our sins and the sins of the world? By the sacrifice of His blood! Jesus went to the Cross of Calvary confident in the will of His Father. Jesus "**considered it a joy to suffer on the Cross**" because He knew the mystery of God's Will. When Jesus cried out from the Cross, "**My God, My God! Why have you forsaken me?**" He was suffering Hell for us. On the Cross Jesus offered His blood in exchange for our sins. The resurrection of Jesus assures us that God the Father accepted His Son's blood sacrifice for our sins.

Now the blessings of Jesus' blood sacrifice include: reconciliation (we are friends with God again); justification (we are judged not guilty because our punishment was paid for by Jesus); righteousness (though we are sinners we are now in the right relationship with God because our sins are removed); and we have salvation now! Jesus is our ransom. When a ransom is demanded for the freedom of hostages, they are not set free until the entire ransom is paid. Jesus paid our ransom for us, in full! How do these blessings from Jesus come ours personally? The blessing of Jesus' ransom becomes ours when we repent, when in faith we throw ourselves to the mercy of God,

acknowledge we have sinned against God; desire to change from our sinful ways; and believe that Jesus paid for our sins with His blood sacrifice.

Consider the following passages. What do they have in common? Ephesians 1:7 **“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace...;”** Psalm 103:11 **“...as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”**; Isaiah 44:22 **“I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”**; and Micah 7:19. **“You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”** They all teach us that when God forgives us our sins, our sins are sent far away and no longer condemn us.

I know that the mystery of God’s will seems unbelievable – that God would send His Son, pure, unblemished, to shed His blood and die for the sins of sinners and that God would freely forgive anyone and everyone who believed that His Son died for their sins. But this is true my friends. I also know when people are asked to embrace something new and totally different, to risk all for something they have never heard of before they ask, “What’s in it for me? Well I will tell you “what’s in it for you!” What is in the revelation of God’s mystery for us? In the struggles of this life we have the assurance of God’s promises and faithfulness. When loneliness or fear strike us, we have His promise of presence and protection. We are confident that He will provide for us no matter how trying life might get. At the time of a loved one’s death or our own, we can have comfort knowing that eternal life awaits us. We are confident in life and or death that our sins are totally forgiven. We know that we will be with God in the life to come because just as He rose, we shall rise. God has not kept His will a mystery. He has revealed it to us through Jesus, His Son, our LORD and Savior.

So my friends, as we begin the year 2010, let us rejoice and celebrate. God has chosen to reveal the mystery of His will to us. The mystery is solved! God loves us, forgives us, and cares for us. Let also make it a point to tell others the mystery of God. Share the Good News of God’s love for sinners in Jesus Christ. May the love of God bless you in the New Year! IJN, amen.